

INDUSTRIAL WORKER

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

April 2013 #1754 Vol. 110 No. 3 \$2/ £2/ €2



**When Child Care
Workers Fought Back**

3

**Special: Requiem For
A Campaign**

6-7

**OBU & Horizontal
Worker Cooperatives
In Texas**

11

**100 Million Workers
Go On General Strike
In India**

12

Wobblies Organize, Strike At Nonprofit In Minneapolis

By X364359

On Monday, Feb. 25, canvass workers at Sisters' Camelot, a nonprofit food share organization in Minneapolis, went public as card-holding IWW members. The workers demanded a negotiation meeting with the management collective (of which most of the workforce are not members, despite claiming to be a "worker collective") on Friday, March 1, at which they presented their demands. The workers also threatened to strike if the collective refused to negotiate. After discussing the demands for an hour, the bosses told the workers that they would not negotiate, and the workers went on strike.

The union has near-unanimous support from canvassers, most of whom have signed red cards or pledged to, and a majority of whom took part in the "march on the collective" when they went public. Additionally, one of the canvass directors,

Bobby Becker, openly supports the union and joined the workers on strike, although he is ineligible for IWW membership under the existing management structure.

The workers began organizing about four months prior to going public and approached the IWW on their own, after years of declining workplace conditions. Their grievances include lack of workplace democracy, below-standard pay, no medical coverage for job-related injuries, and no paid vacation/sick days. Although Sisters' Camelot claims to be a "collective" and that "there are no bosses here," both directors and the collective can hire and fire canvassers who aren't collective members. The workers' main

Continued on 8



Sisters' Camelot workers show off their red cards after going public as IWW members on Feb. 25.

Photo: colt thundercat

Grand Rapids Call Center Workers Win Union Election



Star Ticket Workers rally in January.

Photo: Evelyn Stone

By Evelyn Stone

After three years of careful organizing, the IWW Star Tickets Workers Union went public in late January. Star Tickets is a ticketing agency owned by Detroit-area millionaire Jack Krasula with an office in Grand Rapids, Mich. The company consists of a small call center with customer service representatives who sell event

tickets to customers and office workers who deal with clients such as casinos and concert venues. Over the last few years, our organizing committee has functioned as the human resources department because our office doesn't actually have one. Collaboratively, we solve problems that come up at work, support each other, and affect some victories by working together without publicly using the title "union." The most significant victory was getting the company to stop hiring call center workers as "independent contractors" in 2011. We've always been cautious—perhaps too cautious—with our organizing, and our decision to come out in January was uncharacteristically sudden because the workload and stress level in the client services department had become unbearable. We realized that our fellow workers in that department could not go

on any longer under these conditions.

The workers in client services are on salary, which basically means there's no cap to the amount of hours they have to work, and, while the workload and job description of the staff in that department has been steadily expanding over the last two years, the compensation certainly has not. Client services representatives regularly work 60 to 70 hours per week and still find it impossible to finish their work, much less satisfy their own high standards for the work they do. They may have paid time off, but they are too afraid to use it because of how much work will pile up during their day off. This is an extremely unfulfilling situation to be in week after week. Not to mention it's very hard to justify giving up all your free time and social relationships just for a job that, when you do the math, pays an average of about \$9.50 per hour. Currently, the people working in that department are miserable, and all it would take to fix is hiring a couple more people to help distribute the workload. However, Krasula runs Star Tickets on an austerity model, and he is committed to getting the most work out of the fewest people for the

lowest pay. Although we have pointed out this problem over and over, he refuses to make changes.

We had always pictured our ideal scenario for going public as a union at a time when we had a strong majority of support in the office and could affect a big walk-on-the-boss straight to Krasula, who is rarely in our office. We wanted to include everyone on the organizing committee. However, we realized that we couldn't wait any longer for that ideal scenario. The committee held an emergency meeting and decided to file a petition with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). It was a difficult decision, but we knew Krasula and knew that he would never bargain with us without legal force. After filing the petition, three of our core members went into the office of the highest manager on site, the vice president of sales, and made our demands for her to pass on to Krasula. These demands were for him to create two new positions—one more client services position and one marketing assistant position to take care of all the various marketing duties that have been dumped on

Continued on 9

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Feminism

When Child Care Workers Fought Back

By Susan Dorazio

In the first decade of the 20th century, agitation by women in the industrial parts of the world for their civil rights and for their rights as workers was gaining momentum. Inspired by this increased militancy—and by the organizing in 1909 of National Women’s Day by the Women’s National Committee of the Socialist Party of America—the Women’s Congress of the Second International, meeting in Copenhagen in 1910, approved the call by German socialist Clara Zetkin and other delegates to create a Women’s Day to foster international solidarity among socialist women.

In contrast to the liberal movements for women’s suffrage and workers’ rights, and in opposition to war and social injustice, International Women’s Day would be firmly placed in the context of the global capitalist system, one that basically refuses to recognize, let alone heed, the needs and rights of women.

In the last decade of the 20th century, another reawakening, also focusing on workers’ rights in the context of the range of women’s roles in society, was occurring in the United States. For the better part of the 1990s, hundreds of child care workers, including myself, took part in a grassroots project called the Worthy Wage Campaign. Through fact-finding, consciousness-raising, marches, rallies, street festivals, letter-writing, and media contact—and under the banner of “Rights, Raises, and Respect”—we confronted what was called the staffing crisis, and were determined to reverse it. Of immediate concern was the revolving door of miserably paid child care workers and the effect this has had on children and families.

As this phenomenon started getting sorted out through data from centers and interviews with workers, certain facts became clear. First and foremost was that our low wages, lack of benefits and good working conditions were subsidizing the cost of child care, either to “ease

the burden” on parents if there were fees to pay, or on government whose spending priorities invariably put human services such as child care at the bottom of the list.

As we got deeper into our understanding of the various crises in child care, many of us started to understand their systemic nature and the ways workers, families and community members were getting manipulated and pitted against each

other. We would see that this was serving to derail us from taking the kind of collective action that would really challenge and transform capitalism, the root cause of the crises that riddles the care and education sectors.

To find allies, some of us who participated in the Worthy Wage Campaign worked hard to get the rights of child care workers, families and children on the agenda of human rights, social justice and radical labor groups. At the same time, those of us affiliated with the IWW, socialist organizations, and/or women’s rights/liberation projects did the reverse (i.e., encouraged child care workers to get involved with the broader movement for social change), since our issues were so often the same. I had what I considered the extra advantage of being a socialist feminist in an overwhelmingly female workforce. This helped me see my experiences as a child care worker from both a class-based and a gender perspective. Others, also, came to appreciate the fact that patriarchy and misogyny had a lot to do



Graphic: amirisara.blogspot.com

with our low pay, low status, and a tendency to undervalue ourselves.

Unfortunately, liberal politics won out, and by 2002, the Worthy Wage Campaign was now headquartered in Washington, D.C., renamed the Center for the Child Care Workforce, and officially a project of the mainstream American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation. Empowerment for radical change of the relationship between workers, families and communities—based on full government funding for good wages and benefits, low child-staff ratios, high quality facilities, support services and free tuition—had become a vague reference to a “well-educated” workforce, receiving “better compensation” and a “voice” in their workplace.

Meanwhile, in Scotland, the public sector nursery nurses, members of Unison, were getting fed up with government stone-walling on their own child care crisis. The ruse of so-called professionalism that had undermined the militancy of the Worthy Wage Campaign was playing itself out in Scotland in the form of expanded job descriptions but no pay increases for the added responsibilities. In fact, there had been no salary review since 1988 in any of the Scottish councils in charge of overseeing the nurseries.

By the end of 2003, between 4,000 and 5,000 nursery nurses, disgusted by the intransigence of both the councils and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities had voted for strike action that led to a

series of regional one- or two-day strikes, accompanied by rallies and demonstrations. By March 1, 2004, the nursery nurses were ready to engage in an all-out, indefinite strike for a national settlement on pay raises in line with their current job requirements and the importance of their work.

Unfortunately, but predictably, the standard business union tactics of Unison not only failed to sufficiently support solidarity among the nursery nurses but failed to foster links between the nursery nurses and workers in other sectors, and between the nurses and their centers’ families and communities when more picket support and public outcry might well have changed the strike’s outcome.

Instead, the rallying cry for a national settlement—basic to the goal of equal pay for equal work and so vital to enabling the nursery nurses to maintain their resolve—was dropped by Unison based on a pledge of a national review of pay and working conditions at some point in the future. This led to significant discrepancies between the pay settlements negotiated between the union and individual councils and, undoubtedly, to demoralization among the workers when the 12-week strike ended.

Fast forward to London at the end of January 2013, when early years minister Elizabeth Truss proposed changes to child-staff ratios in child care centers in England, as well as the expansion of education requirements for the workers. In child care and other human service sectors this strategy usually works particularly well because it employs the mythology of success through individual effort and perseverance and platitudes about the importance of our work, while exploiting the workers’ collective dedication and compassion. At the same time, it promises families and taxpayers that with one stroke of administrative genius, child care (or whatever) will be “cost-effective” and thus less burdensome.

This is a sham, and workers, families and community activists need to say so via direct and coordinated actions. Child care workers and supporters must hammer away at the fact that wages, benefits, staffing ratios, appreciation of our efforts, and recognition and support of our skills and interests are prime determinants of quality child care—and none of these factors should or need to be ignored.

For those of us who participated in the Worthy Wage Campaign in the United States or the nursery nurses strike in Scotland, the ridiculous atomizing of quality child care that Truss’ proposal represents is an all-too-familiar tactic for diverting attention from those responsible for the wholly inadequate public funding of social services by cleverly focusing attention on the blameless.

Truss and her ilk need to be told that we won’t stand for their continual trade-off schemes, such as further education and training as a precondition for good wages and working conditions. By this time, we should know that quality care and quality jobs cannot be an either/or proposition. Ways must be found to enable them to occur simultaneously, and with the rights, needs, and final say of the staff at the core of this planning.

By turning the spotlight, and turning up the heat, on purposely convoluted pseudo-solutions to serious social problems and on the rapid erosion of the public sector leading to the withering of social services, we will surely advance the struggle for the global unity of the working class.

Furthermore, by remembering the courage and commitment of such women workers as those who participated in the Worthy Wage Campaign in the United States and the striking nursery nurses in Scotland—acting on behalf of all women and all workers—we honor the founders, and perpetuate the meaning, of International Women’s Day in the best way possible.

IWW Constitution Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, “A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work,” we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, “Abolition of the wage system.”

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers’ ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses’ orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month’s dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month’s dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$2000, dues are \$9 a month. If your monthly income is between \$2000 and \$3500, dues are \$18 a month. If your monthly income is over \$3500 a month, dues are \$27 a month. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer.

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Taking Creative Action

By a Pizza Hut Worker

There is no denying that organizing, and class struggle more generally, is hard work—it can be boring and really tiring. However, we need to remember not to get stuck in a pattern that keeps it that way. There is no reason to stick to the old models of action. Let's be creative, let's try new things and most important of all let's encourage new fellow workers to come up with ideas and take the lead on them.

While at Pizza Hut we got creative about taking action, over health and safety and over management belligerence.

My first example is how we dealt with poor safety standards, particularly oven gloves. In the 10 years that I have worked at Pizza Hut, safety has always been issue—the burns on my arms can attest. Oven gloves with holes were a constant issue. Despite it being raised by multiple workers, multiple times, nothing was ever done. So we essentially created a game: binning gloves! As we got in on each shift I checked gloves, and if they were “sub-par,” they would end up in the bin.

The trick to making it fun in this case though was through involving other Pizza Hut workers, active fellow workers or not. That meant taking a risk that they could have dobbed us in, but the reality was we knew it was an issue that annoyed everyone. We also made a game of getting away with it. At the core however, this action was real and meaningful. It represents two classic tactics: dual power and workplace sabotage. Although both were on a small scale, it meant a lot to workers in a historically unorganized workplace.

The second example I would put forward was a matter of accidentally discovering a weak spot. For some months, we had been trying to push through a grievance. A grievance forms a part of a labor dispute in British employment law and in practice; it is a pretty decent way of putting your bosses on notice.

Despite our best efforts to talk, we had been completely ignored. So we began to plan our next move. Our dispute was over Bank Holiday pay, which is usually time-and-a-half, but at Pizza Hut this is standard pay, as well as delivery drivers' commission, which they receive on a per delivery basis.

The plan was to organize a walk-out on the next Bank Holiday, which would have been on the day of the illustrious royal wedding (a nice note of celebration if you ask me). However, the plan fell apart when an unpopular loud mouth thought



Sheffield Pizza Hut, 2012. Photo: Tristan Metcalfe

it would be funny to catch us out. In front of a manager and several other staff we didn't yet trust, he shouted out, “What's this about, this strike next week then?”

We had been caught, we hadn't planned for this. What would happen? I would be fired for sure. Would others be too, had we just lost the lot? No, it was quite the opposite. Management was desperate to talk to us. Suddenly we found ourselves very popular and looked after. Before we knew it our area manager came down to meet with us and tried to settle the dispute, in his “I am just one of you guys” manner. Obviously we didn't get what we wanted but we managed to sort some other issues around the moped drivers' safety gear.

Tactics may sometimes come from where you least expect them. Keeping an open mind about ways to deal with issues and not letting yourself be held back by preconceptions of what falls under proper methods allows for some interesting results. Central to this is remaining open at all times to the input of your fellow workers, using the skills around you and encouraging involvement.

Neither of these examples came about spontaneously; they grew naturally out of the culture of cooperation that we managed to build in our shop, or “Wobbling the job.” This is something that we can do as organizers before we even “out” ourselves as such. The boss might want a car driver to take a long delivery to keep the times down and win themselves a cash bonus; the car driver doesn't want to be out of pocket on fuel. A moped rider can turn directly to the car driver, ignoring the boss, and offer to swap for their shorter delivery. Depending on the workers and bosses involved this may not work but it will always create a bond outside of the boss-worker hierarchy, it is this bond which will see us through any action, large or small.

WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 62

Ringin' Up Some Changes

Of all the workers whose industries were placed under government control during World War I, only telephone operators had not received a wage increase. With their agreement expiring on Dec. 31, 1918, organized organizers in Boston demanded a new wage scale that would bring weekly wages to a range of \$10 to \$22.

The New England Telephone Co. referred the operators to Postmaster General Burleson, who sat on the operators' request for months. On April 11, 1919 the union again asked the Boston telephone company for relief. When the company refused, the union struck on April 15. Said union president Julia O'Connor, the operators “could expect no justice under the present system and they only way they could get it was to fight for it.”

To everyone's surprise, more than 3,000 telephone operators at 90 exchanges throughout New England joined the Boston area operators, shutting down telephone service throughout the region. On the second day of the strike, the women were followed by 12,000 cable splicers and other workmen belonging to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.



The telephone companies recruited scabs from Harvard University and MIT. The Ivy League strikebreakers told the press they were looking forward to “sport and diversion.” They got their excitement — several had their teeth knocked out by the striking women, who yelled, “He is taking our bread! Give it to him!”

It took the operators only five days on the picket line to make the right connections. At an April 20 meeting, company officials accepted the wage scales demanded by the union. The men, who walked out without demands of their own, got a 50 cent a day raise. Said Julia O'Connor: “It is the best agreement ever reached by the telephone operators.” Soon after, she went on a nationwide speaking tour to urge operators to organize.

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

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Wobbly & North American News

Court Rules In Favor Of Wobblies, Activists

By Brendan Maslauskas Dunn

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in Seattle ruled in favor of Wobblies and other activists in a lawsuit against the U.S. Army. The case of *Panagacos v. Towery* was filed against the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and countless police agencies who were involved with infiltrating, data mining and spying on many activists (see “Remember, Remember, The 5th Of November: IWW Legal Battle With U.S. Army Rages On,” November 2012 IW, page 5).

The case comes out of the street battles waged in the ports of Olympia, Tacoma and Aberdeen, Wash., between 2006 and 2009. In November 2007, the Port of Olympia was shut down by a direct action of hundreds of anti-war demonstrators connected with Port Militarization Resistance (PMR) who were resisting the shipment of military vehicles through Pacific Northwest ports.

It was discovered in 2009 through public records requests that the activist “John Jacob” was actually John J. Towery II, an army operative connected with a Fusion Center at nearby Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The records showed that Towery was not working alone in infiltrating and spying on the anti-war and anarchist movements in Washington. This surveillance program was unleashed



Police & protestors face off at the Port of Olympia in 2007. Photo: Portland Indymedia

during George W. Bush’s presidency and continued under current U.S. President Barack Obama.

Attorney Larry Hildes represents the plaintiffs and himself joined the IWW during the Redwood Summer campaign waged by environmentalists and timber workers to save California’s old growth redwood forests from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Hildes recently started the discovery process in the case to see what the scope and nature of the spying was. Two other attorneys recently joined the case as well.

Wobblies from Olympia and Tacoma were spied on, including the General Secretary Treasurer of the IWW, Sam Green. It’s clear that the activists’ reliance on direct action to disrupt the war effort and effectively shut down the Port of Olympia was the catalyst for the government’s spy program in the region. The legal battle continues, as will the direct action. Depositions for the trial are expected to take place this year.

Ministry Issues Checks For Unpaid Wages

By the Ottawa-Outaouais IWW

Fifteen months is a long time for workers depending on minimum wage to wait for justice. On Feb. 20, the Ontario Ministry of Labour issued checks to IWW members

Stephen Toth and Brandon Wallans, owed unpaid wages, in response to a long and arduous battle with a holdout employer.

“This satisfactory settlement is a message to other Ottawa employers that respecting their workers and paying them their wages is not optional,” said Ahmed, an IWW member.



Graphic: change.org

Stephen and Brandon are very happy with the result and look forward to helping other workers defend their rights on the job and fight wage theft.

Wage theft is a growing trend among bosses who decide not to pay some or all of the wages earned by their employees. These thefts can be fought by workers most effectively when they unite and take action, not just through formal legal channels but also by hitting the picket lines.

For more information, visit: <http://ottawaiww.org>.

Teachers Boycott Standardized Tests

By John Kalwaic

On Jan. 9, teachers at Garfield High School in Seattle, Wash., launched a boycott of a state-mandated standardized test known as the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP). Teachers at Garfield felt that MAP was unnecessary and took valuable time away from teaching. The administration of the school wants teachers to administer the MAP test; the school officials warned the teachers of disciplinary action for refusing to give the MAP test to students. Many teachers and students in other schools and around the United States feel the same way, that standardized tests are being overused.

Teachers in other schools around the Seattle area have also joined in the boycott including the two largest teachers’ unions: the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, who have also shown support for the teachers at Garfield. The MAP comes from a new family of standardized test called “high stakes testing,” which is being pushed by an entire industry of test makers who are lobbying politicians.

Other groups of teachers and students began to boycott high stakes tests. In Massachusetts a coalition of 130 professors and researchers, including many from Harvard, Tufts, Boston and Brandeis Universities called for a boycott of the tests. The research committee had condemned their state reliance on tests, citing a nine-year study which concluded that high stakes testing did not improve education results. In Providence, R.I., the Providence Student Union condemned use of another high stakes test, the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). Providence High School students staged a demonstration on Feb.



Students protest in Seattle. Photo: edvoices.com

13 to protest NECAP by dressing up as zombies to bring to light the zombie-like education high stakes testing encourages. Demonstrators also claimed that less than 60 percent of Providence students would pass the NECAP. In Portland, Ore., members of the Portland Student Union

(PSU) launched a campaign to opt-out of standardized tests. Members of PSU denounced the Oregon Knowledge and Assessment Test (OAK) and prompted students to opt-out of the OAK tests.

Students can opt-out of many of these newly mandated high stakes standardized test as long as they have a note from their parents; in many cases, they have to make up for it with some other project. Some parents and students fear that they will not graduate if they do not take these tests, so the support for the test boycott is mixed. On Feb. 4, the day that the MAP test was administered at Garfield High School, very few students took the test seriously, and many had permission from their parents to opt-out of the test. Some refused to take the test while other students had their scores dismissed because they “rushed through it.” It is important to note that not every job action has to be based on wages and benefits; some can revolve around job-related issues, even ones that don’t directly affect the workers. Students are the most important part of a teacher’s job, so concern for them is of the utmost importance especially in these times where austerity measures threaten the livelihood of both teachers and students. Rigidity, zero tolerance policies, teacher evaluations and high stakes testing all threaten teachers and students alike.

With files from U.S. News & World Report, The Washington Post, and EdVoices.com.

Alaska IWW Pickets Plan To Curtail Rights

From the Alaska IWW

Here’s a photo from the Alaska soon-to-be-branch. This is from Feb. 15, when the group joined other union members in protesting a citywide plan which would limit pay increases, extinguish the right to strike and hand the final decision on stalled labor negotiations to the Anchorage Assembly rather than a third-party arbitrator.



Photo: Chris White

Indiana IWW: Overcoming Obstacles And Making Progress

By Michael White, General Secretary of the Indiana IWW

The last time I wrote in to update everyone on what we were doing here in Indiana we had just had our first all-state meeting at the end of November (see “Indiana IWW Holds First All-State Meeting,” January/February 2013 IW, page 5). Since then we have made quite a bit of progress. In fact it is amazing considering where we were in November. It has all been very fun, we are doing a lot of good work and making new connections, but it has also been a lot of hard work and late nights.

On Feb. 17 we were approved for our General Membership Branch (GMB) charter and we were approved for our first sponsored job shop, Celestial Panther Publishing. We currently have a membership list that is in the 50s and growing; it was bolstered in the first few months due to the support we raised from the Wobbly Tour of Indiana that FW Hope Asya and I took in early October 2012. We have elected officers and more delegates. We currently have 10 delegates throughout the state of Indiana. Among many other activities, I and the other officers of the branch have spent many hours organizing contact lists by Industrial Union number,

mapping out our membership, maintaining the Facebook page, and keeping in regular contact with fellow workers using all platforms. Our new delegates have been instrumental in the success we have had. They have been coordinating between each other, contacting the membership, staying in contact with myself as the General Secretary and talking to new workers each day. The membership that we have has been very active so far—they come from all over the state, and many of them want to organize their workplace.

We have held meetings on the third Saturday of every month since November. Our December meeting had the lowest attendance with only 17 present; January we managed 28 people; and in February we had 32 people attend. We think December was low in attendance due to travelling, bad weather and general holiday season woes. We also managed to secure a place to hold our GMB monthly meetings for the foreseeable future, which was a major problem for us from month-to-month. We think that with the new space and the regular meeting time/date, we should have increasingly better turnouts.

Some of the biggest problems we have faced are most apparent when organizing throughout an entire state. The distance between people is always an issue, but that

shouldn’t be as much of a problem now because we have 10 delegates throughout the state to sign up new members and meet people. We dealt with it in the past by making the Facebook page, creating an Indiana IWW email list, and driving out to meet people face-to-face in their town or city. Another problem has been how to connect with people who are not on Facebook. This was solved by using email to contact those people, by making phone number contact lists, and continuously meeting with and talking to members and workers. Of course another issue is that people generally do not know that an IWW branch exists or is actively organizing within the state. To get the word out about our branch we have done as much as possible, by handing out flyers, putting up posters, using “silent agitators,” connecting with people on Facebook and Twitter, talking to any and all workers that we can, holding call-out meetings in different locales and other such outreach efforts. There have been other minor troubles of course; coordinating things, trying to get in contact with people, waiting on things, and the dreaded paperwork. But the problems have been nothing compared to the satisfaction of overcoming them. Travel-



February GMB meeting. Photo: Hope Asya

ling with my friends and fellow workers, meeting new people, and singing “Solidarity Forever” in a room full of 32 Wobs more than makes up for all the effort.

As for right now, some of our plans for the future include a publication for the Indiana IWW, which we are in the process of hammering out, and also we are planning a May Day rally in Indianapolis. So far we have gotten much of the early paperwork figured out and turned in and we have been contacting other groups, unions, and people to spread the word and get as many people out as possible. We plan to have speakers, food and fun. If anybody is in the Indianapolis area around May Day, come find us!

Special

Requiem For A Campaign

By Grace Parker

Oftentimes as workplace organizers, we have a difficult time admitting our mistakes. We are driven and strong-willed, and though these attributes often aid us in the struggle, they can also hold us back from self-reflection and acknowledgment of our flaws. As Wobblies, how do we cope with the realization that our entire campaign was perhaps a mistake from the start? For one, we view the situation as a learning opportunity. There is no such thing as a failed campaign, for although we may pull ourselves out of a workplace without making clear, concrete gains on the shop floor, we also take away many valuable lessons regarding ourselves, our branches, and the IWW as a whole. These lessons must be passed on to fellow organizers in the union in order to facilitate a culture of skill-sharing, and hopefully, if done correctly, the union will not make the same mistakes twice. Secondly, ending a campaign is not just a union issue; it is a matter of great personal importance for the organizers involved. We put our blood, sweat and tears into an organizing drive, and if we fail to sort out our feelings as we disengage from a campaign, we are setting ourselves up for failure in our proceeding endeavors. In order to succeed in the struggle long-term, it is just as important for us to face our personal issues as it is to reflect on our organizing. In this piece, I will attempt to address both of these aspects in relation to the recently halted grocery store campaign in the Twin Cities General Membership Branch (GMB).

Organizational Lessons

The core organizers, including myself, had already been working at the grocery stores for at least a year, and we joined the IWW in the wake of the Jimmy John's Workers Union (JJWU) campaign going public. It was an exciting time to be a Wobbly in Minneapolis. There were direct actions, events, and parties every week. Optimism was in the air, and there was a general feeling that we could succeed in any organizing endeavor. Before joining the IWW, I had never considered building a union in my workplace. Even for the first couple months of membership, I held onto the belief that the grocery store was not really a target for organizing, and I preferred the idea of doing solidarity work with Jimmy John's and other fast food organizing drives. Those workers were fighting for basic things such as higher wages and sick days—that which we already enjoyed at the grocery stores. I did not think that a union was necessary, a view that changed over time as I learned more about the IWW and the class struggle. Then in late October 2010, I was at a house party following the JJWU National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election loss. A group of five or six grocery store workers, including myself, had formed a circle and were talking about what a union drive would look like in our workplaces. Two of us were already Wobblies and the rest were clearly union supporters. It was during this conversation that we decided we were going to try to form a union for the Twin Cities grocery store workers. There was little forethought and very little research that went into the decision, something that is extremely important to the start of a campaign. Instead, we were just a group of kids drinking beers at a party who thought that the Jimmy John's union was cool, and we figured that it would be cool if we did the same thing too.

When we came to the branch in December 2010 asking to become an official IWW campaign, there was no existing Industrial Organizing Committee (IOC) for food and retail workers in the Twin Cities. That body would not be formed for another three months. Instead, we had to go in front of the entire GMB to announce ourselves, a task that was somewhat intimidating for us as brand new members. Ad-



Graphic: iww.org

ditionally, by telling our entire GMB about our campaign, it created the impression that we were much farther along in our organizing than we actually were. Fellow workers became incredibly excited about the campaign, and many were convinced that it was “the” new campaign following the JJWU's NLRB loss. This brings up an interesting point about the use of resources in the union. We typically think of these as financial or material, but there are also emotional resources that exist within the union, meaning that fellow workers put time and energy into thinking about and supporting a campaign and its organizers. By telling the entire branch about our organizing, as well as NOT telling them about the flaws and stagnation within the campaign, we became an emotional drain on the branch and the international. It also created a sense of guilt amongst the organizers, which was an emotional drain on us as well. This is something to keep in mind for future projects.

Not only did our campaign fail to communicate directly and effectively with the branch, we also failed to communicate with each other. Oftentimes, we were not open or direct when issues arose. Sometimes these issues were personal, and they would boil under the surface until they occasionally blew up. More often however, the issues were organizational. Without clear communication, we were unable to have solid, consistent meetings, and it was difficult to follow up with each other on assigned tasks. There was often a lack of honesty in reporting progress in each store, leading others to believe that we were further along than we actually were. If we had been honest and open with each other and ourselves, we could have made more progress in organizing. Alternatively, we could have realized much sooner that this campaign was going nowhere, and we could have redirected our energies to a different project that was more worth our time.

Coming back to the subject of IOCs: if your branch has at least four workers in a given industry and you are actively organizing, I highly recommend forming an IOC. I don't care if your branch only has 10 active members; just start an IOC already. For one, shop-talk has no place at a GMB meeting. Anyone off the street can come to an IWW branch, meaning that any culture of discretion that has been created is negated. IOCs should be open only to IWW members, and preferably those who work in that specific industry, thus preserving the privacy of campaigns and individual fellow workers. Also, GMB meetings can be long, boring, and tedious, which can quickly turn a co-worker off from the union if it is their first exposure to the IWW. Instead, bringing them to an IOC meeting is empowering. They get to

meet other union members who are in a similar life situation, which makes them feel less isolated. When facilitated in the right way, an IOC creates a safe space to talk about working conditions, organizing, and the industry in a way that cannot occur at a GMB meeting.

Our grocery store campaign was unique in that it was one of the first campaigns that came to the Twin Cities IWW and stuck around, instead of being chosen by the branch in a purposeful way. This created some interesting dynamics. For one, there was no need for us to salt into the stores, and we already had established relationships with our co-workers. We had existing contact lists, social and physical mapping was a breeze, and in some ways a few of us were already social leaders in our workplaces. However, this led to some problems. The first issue was that we immediately began to organize within our existing social groups in our own departments. In less than two weeks, grocery store “W” already had around six workers take out red cards. Sounds great, right? Unfortunately, it was not that easy. All of these workers were from the same social group in the same department. It quickly became clear that, although these workers were agitated about their conditions, many of them only signed cards and came to meetings because their friends were. It felt cliquish, which meant that it became harder to bring in new workers who were not a part of that social group, and meetings quickly devolved into complaining sessions amongst friends. Most importantly, when these workers realized that union organizing meant much more than bitching about work and going to parties, they dropped off the map. As organizers, we learned that while existing friendships in the workplace can sometimes be useful in a campaign, they are no substitute for true agitation, education and organization.

Another issue that arose from the fact that we came to the IWW instead of the IWW coming to us was that, in hindsight, the grocery stores were just not great targets. While my own department had many issues surrounding pay and management, the majority of workers in the stores actually have it relatively good. The material conditions at the grocery stores are some of the best in the Twin Cities. Wages are the same, if not better, than United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) grocery stores. Now, I'm not saying that everything is wonderful and sunny and covered with rainbows, but compared to the rest of the class in our industry, it's a fairly cushy job. At Jimmy John's, for example, it is easy to agitate co-workers about issues surrounding pay because minimum wage sucks. But earning \$10 to \$13 per hour at a grocery store when you are a 20-something years old without a college degree is

a bit harder to agitate around. It still sucks, but the “it-could-be-worse” mentality is extremely prevalent. Additionally, from the union's perspective, the grocery stores are not strategic in the greater picture of the struggle. While they are a major part of life in the Twin Cities (for a certain socio-economic group that much of the GMB is a part of), the grocery store campaign had a limited ability to create a greater impact within the class. For example, the JJWU campaign not only affected Minneapolis, it also started a ripple effect that touched fast food workers across the country. But these grocery stores are part of an incredibly niche sector of the food chain. The potential for creating a greater splash in the industry was negligible. Also, the workforce largely consists of downwardly mobile middle class white people, a demographic that by no means lacks representation within our union. Because of these factors, it is highly doubtful that the Twin Cities GMB would have ever sought out an organizing drive at the grocery stores. But since we came to the IWW instead of the other way around, the campaign took hold. The branch was excited that a group of workers had decided on their own to organize with the IWW, and that it was finally big enough and visible enough to bring new folks around without having to seek us out. But I also believe that this excitement stemmed from the successes of the Jimmy John's campaign. Twin Cities Wobblies were still riding the JJWU high, and they were eager to jump onto the first opportunity that came at them.

Unfortunately, that excitement also clouded our strategic judgment. I'm not arguing that we should say “no” to groups of workers that come to the union for help. That would also be un-strategic and just plain silly. Instead, I believe that the grocery store campaign is a good lesson in setting boundaries and being honest with each other. Instead of continuing to work on a campaign that was bound to die from the start, we should have had some serious conversations about why we want to organize and what we are trying to get out of it. We were brand new to workplace organizing, and someone needed to have those discussions with us. It's a tricky situation and a difficult conversation to have, but it would ultimately have been beneficial for the branch, the union, and us as organizers.

Some fellow workers have pointed out that we as organizers should not abandon the grocery store campaigns because they are “low-hanging fruit” in the sense that they are doing very well business-wise, are socially tied to our existing networks, are a winnable size, and that a victory in the stores would put the Twin Cities IWW firmly on the labor map. With all due respect to those making these arguments, I would have to disagree. While it's true that these stores are doing incredibly well financially, because of the unique nature of the ownership structure, many workers and other members of the community feel as though they actually have a stake in the economic success of the businesses. I will not go into further detail as doing so would easily identify the stores in question, but this mentality has greatly influenced organizing on the shop floor, and if the campaign were ever to go public, it would also affect the community's reaction towards unionization in a negative way. In response to the statement that a clear victory would put the IWW on the Twin Cities labor map, I would argue that the campaign at Jimmy John's was incredibly successful in that sense, and that further campaigns in that sector would achieve the same desired effect as a campaign at the grocery stores. I'm not particularly interested in putting in more time and effort into attempts at radicalizing the petty-bourgeoisie in South Minneapolis.

An issue that has risen in the Twin

Continued on next page

Special

Requiem For A Campaign



The Twin Cities GMB rallies in 2010.

Photo: tcorganizer.com

Continued from previous page

Cities GMB is our affiliation with the South Minneapolis youth subculture. The Jimmy John's campaign was closely tied with the punk and bicycle scenes, which was not necessarily a negative thing, but it definitely made it more difficult to organize outside of those social groups. However, it did bring in many new members, including myself. The issue now is that we are having a hard time reaching into other segments of the working class. The grocery store campaign did nothing to help with this issue. The subcultural identities of workers at Jimmy John's and at the grocery stores are very similar and the social scenes often overlap. The Twin Cities GMB is becoming, or already has become, the union for young, "hip" 20-somethings in Minneapolis. Of course, that is not a completely realistic picture of our branch, but it is what the public sees. We want to be seen as a union for ALL workers, which is what we are in theory, but unless we actively work to make that a reality, we will forever be raising money at punk shows and dance parties attended by largely white, downwardly-mobile middle class kids.

On a similar note, I think it is important to reflect on the differences between those who stayed around in the union from the grocery store campaign and those who came and went. I would put the total number of workers who either signed a red card or came to a committee meeting at around 30 since December 2010, but now the current number is around six. Two of those remaining workers salted into the campaign and were previously highly involved in the IWW and had experience in workplace organizing. The rest of us worked there before the campaign began. What prevented the other 24 workers from sticking around? Some moved to other cities, some quit or were fired and got new jobs, and others just dropped out of the committee. None of these are valid excuses that we as organizers can make. Most workers who moved away went to Portland or New York, both cities with IWW branches to plug into. And if we are organizing correctly, workers should be going to another job and organizing there as well. Once again, this stems back to our lackluster attempts at agitation, education, and organization. However, the most important workers who fell off the grid are the ones who are still working in the grocery stores. What made them not want to participate? Of course, I cannot speak for all of the workers, and there are probably various reasons why they left that they are not willing to disclose to us. But I know that at least one worker was turned off by the party culture that has developed amongst food and retail Wobblies in the Twin Cities. The post-meeting drinking that often occurs made this worker feel uncomfortable, and although I suspect that there were other contributing factors that I will refrain from delving into, it was enough to make this fellow worker want to renounce their involvement with the IWW and the grocery store campaign. Ironically,

since this worker dropped out, our IOC has drastically cut down on our post-meeting parties for reasons unrelated to this worker's departure from the union. However, the incident is still a lesson in the importance of creating sober spaces and non-late night social activities.

That being said, workers who were the most involved with the campaign at various stages

also had the strongest social ties to the Twin Cities GMB. I think this reflects as much on us as organizers as it does on the workers. We often fell into the trap of letting our socializing do the organizing for us, and when the balance between socializing and organizing falls too heavily on the former, the worker is not going to have the skills or knowledge of the IWW to become an organizer themselves in the fullest capacity. When they leave the shop, which is a common occurrence in the high-turnover food and retail industry, it's likely that their union involvement will wane as well. Another grocery store campaign is in the process of developing a mentorship program within their shop committee, and I think that something of that nature could have been extremely helpful to our campaign. However, at the height of the campaign in my shop last summer, I know that I did not have an adequate level of political education or organizing experience to be able to serve as a mentor for a new member. In such a case, the IOC would be a great resource to use.

Thus far, I have only discussed negative aspects of the campaign that we can learn from, but there were many positives as well that I do not wish to gloss over. One of the most successful outcomes was that we built up four solid union members who previously had very little-to-no experience in workplace organizing. Not only did we gain valuable skills, but we also grew as radical, class-conscious workers. We now have knowledge that we can bring with us to new campaigns and projects, and we can share our experiences with others in the IWW. We became strong, committed members of our branch, and we have also become involved in the politics of the international, whether through the founding and administration of Food and Retail Workers United, working as branch Organizing Department liaisons, writing for the *Industrial Worker*, or by becoming trainers. Without the grocery store campaign, there is a good chance that most, if not all, of us would have dropped out of the union following the height of the JJWU campaign. The grocery stores gave us something to plug into, a project to call our own. The best way for workers to stay involved in the IWW is to organize, and that's what we did.

Another reason that I am proud of our campaign is that it was started, led, and ultimately finished by women and gender-queer fellow workers. Because of this, our committee was predominantly made up of non-males. Wobblies from other branches often ask me why the Twin Cities GMB has so many women who are involved, and my answer to that is that we already have a strong non-male presence, and that in turn makes it easier for new women and non-gender conforming folks to join and become involved. It may seem like a chicken-or-the-egg situation, but it's really not that difficult. Non-male identified organizers are better at organizing non-male identified workers. It's that simple. I'm not saying that men can't also organize these workers or be great allies;

it's just that we are better at it. I have seen this firsthand, and I firmly believe it to be true. Some may disagree with this statement, but I would challenge those folks to look at the gender makeup of the Twin Cities GMB, and then compare it to their own branches. Which branch has more involved and committed women and gender-queer organizers? With few exceptions, the answer is going to be the Twin Cities. Of course, we still have a long way to go in terms of achieving gender equality within our branch, but I would say that we have built a solid foundation. So, my message to all the union ladies and non-gender conforming rebel workers out there is GO OUT AND ORGANIZE. Seriously. Your branch will thank you, the union will thank you, and you will thank yourself.

Personal Lessons

I often view the grocery store campaign as a child. My fellow organizers and I brought this child into the world, and as a consequence, it had to be nurtured or it would die. Ultimately, we were bad parents, as the campaign failed in many respects. We did not do our best to raise it in the best possible way. It was often neglected, and that is part of the reason why it did not mature into a fully functioning campaign. During the meeting in July 2012 when we decided to end the campaign, the words that I actually used to describe my feelings were "throwing our baby into the garbage." This is indeed a graphic and disturbing analogy, but I cannot deny that this was how I felt. I had become incredibly attached to the idea of unionizing at the grocery stores. I had been around these stores my entire life (my mother has worked in that industry since the mid-1980s), and it became a very personal struggle for me. The changes that have been occurring in the grocery stores for the past 5 to 10 years were, in my mind, not only attacks on the workers and working conditions, but also attacks on my childhood and all of the work that my mother and her peers put in throughout the years. It is difficult to describe, but I believe that this feeling contributed greatly to my attachment to the campaign. Thus, there is a sense of guilt that I have about abandoning our organizing.

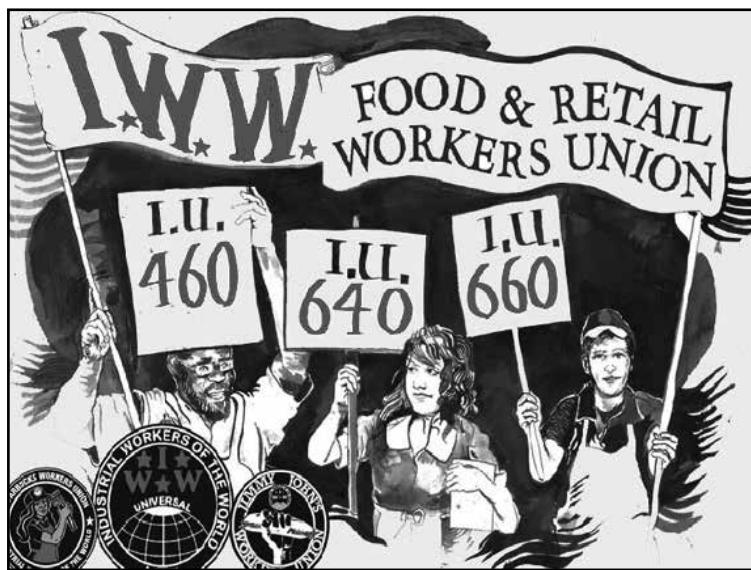
We often only speak of organizing in logistical terms. In trainings, we are inoculated about issues that we will face in a campaign, but it is usually only in a practical sense. As Wobblies, we often gloss over the personal stresses on our emotions and mental well-being that arise as we organize. Over the course of the grocery store campaign, I came to realize that addressing these issues are just as important as learning how to run a meeting, how to have a one-on-one meeting with a fellow worker, or asking someone to join the union. For example, after a particularly heightened point of struggle in my shop, a co-worker was fired. We learn how to do a march on the boss or file an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) complaint, but we are never taught how to deal with the emotional fallout of such a situation. I now bear

the burden of responsibility for this co-worker's firing, and that fact is forever on my conscience. I was the one who agitated her, I was the one who convinced her to participate in an action, and as a result, she lost her job. I'm trying to come to terms with this, and it is an issue that I will have to continue to work out emotionally

for some time to come. We need to be better at collectively addressing these sorts of situations, and I think writing about our experiences is a great way to do that.

My involvement in the grocery store campaign also led to some serious mental health issues in my life. Last year, I was going to school full-time, working 25 to 30 hours a week, and organizing on my job. Between classes, homework, wage work, one-on-ones, meetings almost every night, and keeping up with my social life as a 20-year-old, things were going faster than I could keep up. I loved it and thrived on it, but it was incredibly demanding physically. Instead of taking a step back and trying to cut something out, which is what I should have done, I turned to less-than-natural ways to cope with the situation. By the end of summer 2011, I was completely addicted to Adderall, and I couldn't function without it. When I first began using at the beginning of 2011, it seemed like a godsend. I could do everything and I was on top of the world, but it eventually caught up with me. As I continued to use, my body would adjust to the dosage and I would have to keep taking more and more. I was barely eating, lost close to 30 pounds, and even collapsed during a meeting as a result of a panic attack. I realized that not only was I hurting myself and those close to me, my dependence was also affecting the grocery store campaign. Sure, I was doing some hardcore organizing and direct actions, but what I didn't realize was that everyone, including my co-workers, could see that I was in an altered state. Who would want to join a union when the organizer is in an induced manic episode? By September 2011, I was off of the medication, but as a result I experienced an immense drop in energy and drive. The campaign at my store stagnated, and my work in the branch tapered off until I was barely holding on. Once you get into that state, it is hard to pull yourself out. It wasn't until Work People's College this past July that I felt like I had finally rebounded from that low point. The lesson here is that we need to watch out for our fellow workers, not only on the shop floor, but in our personal lives as well. Our current society teaches us to go harder, longer, and more intensely than we should, and in our fight against capitalism, we must also confront those unrealistic bourgeois expectations.

In conclusion, the grocery store campaign, despite its flaws, was in a sense incredibly successful. The IWW doesn't just organize shops, it organizes people and it builds up workers into radical militant unionists. The grocery store campaign created a space in the Twin Cities GMB for that to occur. It also taught us valuable lessons about what *not* to do in an organizing campaign. Through our mistakes, we have become better organizers and we now have the opportunity to share those lessons with others in the union, as well as to bring our skills to new union projects. In the aftermath of the grocery store campaign, we are now equipped to build the union in a more purposeful and organized way.



Logo for Food and Retail Workers United.

Graphic: iww.org

Review

A Primer On Anarcho-Syndicalism For All To Read

Fighting For Ourselves: anarcho-syndicalism and the class struggle. *London: Solidarity Federation and Freedom Press, 2012. Paperback, 124 pages, £6.*

By Lou Rinaldi

The new book from the U.K.-based anarcho-syndicalist group, Solidarity Federation (SolFed), is an excellent primer on anarcho-syndicalism for those interested in the subject. What SolFed has done is put together something concise and readable that isn't clotted with jargon and slogans. While the IWW has never been an anarchist organization, SolFed's form of syndicalism clearly takes influence from the IWW's work developing a democratic union.

Bringing Our Politics Up To Date

The purpose of this text isn't to give us a history lesson, necessarily, but to give us tools to analyze methods and practice and assess how well they worked. Solidarity Federation remarks early in the text that they are "not in search of blueprints but inspiration," looking for a "revolutionary theory [that] keeps pace with practical realities and remains relevant [...] to our everyday lives."

To many both in our milieus and out, unions, including revolutionary unions, are an anachronism of the Old Left and the failed workers movements of the past. But for SolFed, the important thing to remember is what has been effective, not for securing our place within the confines of capitalism, but to push beyond them and to not separate our revolutionary politics from our day-to-day organizing. For Wobblies in the shop, we soon find that we can't hide who we are and be successful. We're a revolutionary union and we want the abolition of the wage system. We don't lead every situation with the black and red, but it informs why and how we organize the Wobbly way.

SolFed puts forth an analysis of the

material conditions that existed previous to the present and how this has culminated into the crisis of today. They focus specifically on the casualization of labor since the late 1970s, and taking astute notes from the past, SolFed puts forward the idea of organizing not only on the shop floor but through grievance-based solidarity networks. Rather than have separate organizations, they believe we should do this work through our own unions. For the IWW, initiatives like this can be seen in the establishment of new commitments to industrial organization like the IWW's Food and Retail Workers United. Efforts like this will hopefully open up opportunities not limited to a shop-by-shop approach, but a true union for all workers. In this respect SolFed's book articulates theory and practice already being undertaken by some parts of our organization.

Our Organizing Is A Revolutionary Practice

One aspect I think is important in this book is its commitment to having politics. In particular, "Fighting For Ourselves" affirms that the practice of solidarity unionism is a commitment to having revolutionary politics. It is our revolutionary practice, and it is the historically most useful revolutionary practice of the workers' movement.

In particular, SolFed advocates that the best aspect of an organization like a union is its associative rather than its representative function. This is one of the most useful political statements that we



Graphic: libcom.org

as a union can adopt. At its very core it means "we are the union," but it goes beyond this into a broader political argument for shop-floor direct action as opposed to contract fights. For SolFed, and similar to the way the IWW has practiced unionism, the associative function of a union "is the means by which workers relate to one another." SolFed describes this as the most basic way a union is formed: workers have power together, so they show solidarity together.

The other function, the representative function, is when unions become bureaucracies by which workers are represented to the boss. Their critique of this type of unionism is that it believes in the legitimacy of having a class-based society and it often waters down its politics to simply bread-and-butter issues without a larger social program. The IWW does neither.

Despite an almost nonstop critique of the IWW, from both Left groupings and the Right—that our failing has been not going for contracts—we can turn this into our strength and SolFed's book helps us articulate this. They argue that an approach that emphasizes building the union into a representational organization, by mediating labor and management through a contract, actually hurts organizations' ability to have active and militant memberships. It makes them reliant on bureaucracies and minimizes militancy to the contract. We've seen the results in the AFL-CIO. By joining together as workers, on the other hand, that push for a revolutionary politic in our everyday lives, we change the very dialogue on what a union can and should

be. Furthermore, we become a more realistic organization, one that understands ebbs and flows of struggle, rather than a number-obsessed party-building union.

Recommended Reading

"Fighting For Ourselves" is a good read that IWW members should consider picking up. Perhaps what struck me the most about it was that despite some disagreements here or there, it presents a call to organize in accessible terms. It took complex systems and broke them down for me. It could potentially become a good educational tool for IWW members, because as we move forward as an organization we need to not just recruit members, we need to create Wobblies. As an organization this means we need to become a thinking organization that is not afraid to have political conversations.

"Fighting For Ourselves" is the type of book I would recommend as a follow-up to classics like Rudolph Rocker's "Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice." I think the two would complement each other well in succession.

We should be taking in books like this, as well as other readings, and incorporating them into our educational and organizing practices. Printed materials like "Weakening the Dam," "Direct Unionism," and "Dismantling Capitalism, Dismantling Patriarchy," should all be recommended reading for us. Wobblies should also be interested in learning about our history so that we can move forward. Check out "Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism" about the syndicalist movement worldwide, or "Truth and Revolution: A History of the Sojourner Truth Organization, 1969–1986." We all know that you have to think before you act, and so we should.

"Fighting For Ourselves" is available from *thoughtcrime ink*, an IWW printing collective in Edmonton, Canada. Their website is <http://thoughtcrimeink.com>.

Wobblies Organize, Strike At Nonprofit In Minneapolis

Continued from 1

demands are to eliminate the canvass director position; obtain worker/union control over hiring and firing; make it an all-union shop in which new canvassers would have one month to join the union; have vacation/sick pay and medical coverage; and get a rotating union rep on the collective to protect the canvassers. They also want a small base pay raise, which if met would still be below the industry standard, and common sense items like professional van maintenance.

Escalation & Reactions

After the strike began on March 1, both sides sent press releases and made phone calls back and forth. When the union offered to meet for negotiations again via phone, the collective claimed they could not meet or make any decisions as a collective until their regular meeting on Monday, March 4, and invited the workers to meet then. The collective then proceeded to meet over the weekend without informing Becker, the pro-union canvass director and collective member, thereby violating their own consensus process. When workers and union supporters arrived at the meeting, the collective read a statement in which they complained of being "forced into a boss role," then fired Shuge Mississippi, a striking worker and ex-collective member who they accused of "manipulating" other workers into unionizing. The bosses also offered in a carrot-and-stick manner to let one canvasser immediately join the collective, and made it easier for others to apply for membership (ignoring the larger causes and blaming the conflict on one troublemaker).

The workers walked out dazed, but galvanized to remain united in the face of management's divide-and-conquer

strategy, with FW Luke Welke declaring his "disgust that the collective could ask us to betray our friend and fellow worker who we work with every day and still believe that they are negotiating in good faith." The bosses' extreme response, while typical, took many by surprise since the organization prides itself as being "radical" and "anti-authoritarian." Some workers quit other higher-paying canvassing jobs to work for Sisters' Camelot because they believed in the organization's mission, but have become disillusioned by disrespectful and often paranoid treatment from the collective. FW Shuge, the fired worker, said, "I love Sisters' Camelot, but it's clear that the collective has turned into the very thing we built it not to be."

Public reactions have been mixed but largely favorable toward the union, with a large outpouring of verbal and material support for the strikers. However, an anti-union "community statement" was circulated and signed by a group of local activists, claiming to call for mediation, while repeating the bosses' rationale on every single point, even supporting the anti-union firing. An angered Wobbly called the collective an "autonomous union-busting collective" in response.

The bosses argue that a union is inappropriate since, they say, "this is not U.S. Steel," and claim, "there are no bosses here." They also claim that canvassers could join the collective if they wanted. Canvassers who have worked before on the collective complain of demeaning and hostile treatment and the collective's failure to meet their needs, which is why they unionized and are demanding more autonomy and workplace democracy.

What's Ahead

The dispute has been a sobering, at

times painful experience for the workers, who despite being on strike and faced with vicious smearing and divide-and-conquer tactics, have been hesitant to escalate due to strong emotional ties to the organization.

The union has shown strong support for the strike, as FW John Snortum explained: "The larger union has done everything from attending meetings and giving us advice to taking notes and facilitating. As well as an amazing fund-raising effort the union has helped us in outreach to the public, media, and other IWW branches. And most importantly has kept us grounded and stable on our views and beliefs that remind us that we are doing the right thing."

This in contrast to the collective's response, said Snortum: "The collective has reacted in a way that clearly demonstrates that [they] are unwilling to give up any power over us that they have. They have made clear that they are not following their own rules and are willing to lie on top of that. Although I knew this was all possible, I did have more faith in the collective and didn't actually expect us to go down this path."

Asked about the campaign's prospects, Snortum added: "In the short term I want to see recognition of the whole union so we can begin negotiations and end the strike. Long term, aside from Camelot continuing to prosper, I hope our campaign can



Sisters' Camelot workers "march on the collective" on Feb. 25. Photo: Bridget Laurenson

inspire and empower other fellow workers in similar situations to take action and bring justice to their workplace."

Meanwhile the strikers have been impressively united and remain hopeful for a quick victory. While being a small shop and taking many by surprise as a "hot shop," in which there were no salts and there was no external prodding by the union, the strike is the biggest thing for the Twin Cities branch since the Jimmy John's Workers Union campaign in 2010-2011. A win at Sisters' Camelot could be a big boost for the whole union, while a loss could prove deeply demoralizing. Additionally, the union drive raises questions about what constitutes a "worker-run collective" and workplace democracy.

When asked what message the strikers would like to convey to the rest of the union, the public, and the bosses, FW Snortum simply said, "Solidarity all the way."

Review

A Reform Of The Money System Is Needed

Robertson, James. Future Money: Breakdown Or Breakthrough? Totnes Devon, U.K.: Green Books, 2012. Paperback, 208 pages, £14.95.

By John Maclean

“The unspoken purposes of the money system from its origins to the present time can be seen as being: to transfer wealth from poorer and weaker to richer and more powerful people and countries, and—as far as possible—to conceal this in mystery, myth and technical tricks of the trade. In recent centuries two further purposes have evolved: to develop the technical, economic and military power of nations in competition with one another; and, in pursuing that aim to exploit the resources of the planet to the maximum extent.” - James Robertson

In “Future Money: Breakdown Or Breakthrough?” James Robertson writes that our elected and unelected rulers are not able to get us out of the messes they’ve landed us in. Robertson believes that the current money system needs to be radically altered, because, as it is, its motivations are “leading us towards a combined collapse of the interacting systems—ecological, social, and economic—on which we depend.” He sees a connection between the decolonization struggles of the last century, and the present-felt needs of people everywhere to free themselves from the “dominating, exploitative, unjust, alien burden[s]” of too-big-to-fail money changers. Government cannot avoid deciding how money works; through its “primary” and “corrective” money functions it exerts a “dominating effect” on flows in any economy. Its three primary money functions are providing the money supply, raising public revenue and spending it; when these are managed poorly the corrective functions include borrowing, and an increasingly costly regulation of private sector finance. The way money is created and used shouldn’t imperil the future of life.

In his historical overview of the money system Robertson writes of patterns and tricks that have long been with us. The most significant pattern has been the “collaboration between rulers and commercial profit-making businesses” to keep people “dependent on the money they create and control.” This enforced dependence has remained, over time, from the “owl of Minerva’s coins” of 5th Century Athens, to the unending floods of paper money under Kublai Kahn, written about by Marco Polo, all the way down to the present privileged international position of the U.S. dollar. Another noticeable pattern is that the creator of the money would secure the

greatest benefit, what is called “seignorage.” In a country like Great Britain were the government currently allows commercial banks to create 97 percent of the money supply, this is quite a significant entitlement. The tricks of the financial trade run the gamut from kings of old cheating the people through the debasement of their coinage to the newer trick of creating “money out of nothing in order to lend it out at a profit.” In this way money can be written into customer bank accounts as credit, transferred to others as payment, and the shift is on from “debt-free cash” to “bank-account money created by the commercial banks as debt.” Robertson calls the creation of the Bank of England in 1694 a “landmark event in the modern history of money.” The idea was sold by William Paterson to London investors, with the incredible provision that government would “pay the interest on the loans out of taxes to be raised in future years.” This was in spite of the fact that the endeavor was from the beginning an attempt to subvert Parliament and fund the foreign adventures of a king. In 1946, the bank was nationalized, and it still had only an indirect control over the money supply through interest rates. In Roman times authors such as Pliny the Elder and Juvenal railed against indebtedness, and the “1 percent” driving society to ruin, and sadly, writes Robertson, today’s Socialist and Labour governments have been helpless before the money system.

Robertson contends that ethical questions have been almost cleansed from the economics profession. This can be seen, he writes, in their “hostile responses” to the ideas of Henry George and C.H. Douglas, both of whom inspired movements in past centuries dedicated to “the ethical purpose of making the money system work for the common interest.” He doesn’t recommend getting bogged down in the intricacies of Georgist or Social Credit thought, but over the years he came to realize that his “practical conclusions” are very much theirs. The fact that “money values” conflict with real-life values is not natural, or divinely ordained, as some advocates of the market claim, but bears the marks of “powerful people” and of governments that “allow banks to hold our societies to ransom.” Robertson sees ethical business and finance as impractical, swimming against



Graphic: renegadeeconomist.com

a greater current, when “what is really needed is to change the direction of the prevailing low.” He writes bluntly that, “We are running out of time. ‘Avarice and usury’ are carrying us all too fast toward self-destruction. Can we wean ourselves off them in time to survive their consequences? That is an open question now.”

Commercial banks are allowed to create credit, literally write it out of nothing into bank accounts as interest-bearing loans, through what is called “fractional reserve banking.” If they are required to keep 10 percent of their deposits on hand, they can create £900 for every £1,000 deposited with them. Robertson provocatively contrasts this privilege, handed over to bankers, with the punishments meted out to forgers and counterfeiters. There is a history “suppressed and ignored” behind this discussion of how money gets created; in 1844, the Bank Charter Act in the United Kingdom deprived commercial banks of the privilege of issuing their own credit notes, because they slowly started to become “actual money” and the “failure to control their issue was damaging the economy as a whole.” Despite the fact that the Bank of England was handed a monopoly over the creation of money, the commercial banks continued turning their trick by causing money to appear in the bank accounts of their customers. The effects of this arrangement are profound and rarely addressed; everyone who spends money is taxed, made to subsidize the banks, which originated the notes as debt, and the money supply, indebtedness and poverty are continually made to grow. Robertson writes that “the present way of providing the money supply systematically works to increase poverty and widen the gap between rich and poor.” Furthermore, this situation yields destructive ecological outcomes, and also ensures that money will initially be put toward harmful but profitable ends. Finally, it all lends itself to “financial instability” and at each stage, through “boom, bust, and aftermath,” windfall profits are secured by the bankers.

Robertson calls for a radical reform of the money system, as well as a shift in tax emphasis, both of which he sees as currently favoring “the rich over the poor,” and, another change, in “public spending,” which he refers to as a “universal Citizen’s

Income.” Current taxation patterns are dysfunctional, and at worse “positively perverse.” Tax avoidance is epidemic, there is an estimated \$11.5 trillion currently held in tax havens; these “cross-border flows of money” distort economic priorities, and tend toward the criminal. It is obviously desirable to shift taxes off of things that can be moved and onto “the value of land and other environmental resources that cannot be moved from one tax jurisdiction to another.” A government, or a money system, working in the “public interest” would make corporations “pay for the value they take from common resources for their own benefit.” For Robertson, the value coming out of creating “a vital common resource” like money “should be captured as public revenue and no longer as private profit.” All of these reforms are directed toward getting rid of burdens that crush, as the late Utah Phillips would say, and combinations of them would yield affordable housing, an income for all as a right, financial stability, and an eventual phasing out of borrowing and costly regulation.

These reforms may seem to apply mostly to well-developed national currencies, but Robertson does not lose sight of the importance of international and local currencies. In 2002, it is estimated that the rest of the world was made to pay the \$400 billion for use of the U.S. dollar, and many see the development of a genuine international currency as preferable to this 1944 Bretton Woods survival. From the suggestions of John Maynard Keynes, at the above economic conference, for a true international currency, called “bancor,” the author moves easily to encouraging local currencies, even regional alternatives to national ones. Robertson sees the urgent need for a revival of “local and household economies” worldwide, and writes that they must become “significant components of national economies” in the coming decades. The current dramatic situation in Greece, in which the “remote euro” is embraced, while the people are allowed to sink, is a perfect example of the need for a return to the local, and the possibility of opening a path toward radical monetary reform. The entitled advocates of austerity in the United States never mention that Social Security cannot add to our debt, or that, in order to deal with indebtedness, we must first deal with how money is created.

Robertson illustrates this best when he writes: “Internationally, as well as nationally and locally, we must reform the whole money system that generates the money values that motivate us all to live in the ways we now do.”

Grand Rapids Call Center Workers Win Union Election



Call center workers celebrate. Photo: Nick Morse

Continued from 1

client services—and announce these open positions to the current staff before posting them for the general public; to update the decade-plus old computers and chairs in the call center; to create mutually agreeable procedures for grievances and for regularly scheduled consideration for raises; and to give call center workers who regularly work 40-plus hours official full-time status. We aren’t asking for more money for ourselves but demanding newer work equipment and a reduction in workload for client services. This is more

money than Krasula would like to invest in the call center, but there is that familiar and infuriating irony that he has no trouble spending money on a union-busting firm.

For six weeks, the firm ran a textbook campaign, distributing numerous propaganda flyers and emails. Their “human resources expert,” Vrsula, was in the office almost every day, conducting lengthy meetings with the workers that the bosses knew would be easy to win to their side. To us, their campaign came off as desperate and grasping at weak or contradictory arguments, but fear is stronger than reason sometimes. These union busters knew exactly what they had to do. Their strongest tactic was to turn people against each other, sew discord in the office, and make the campaign miserable for everyone, so they would associate those feelings with the union. We would have been more immune to these tactics had our timing been a little bit different. It just so happened that three new call center workers had been hired shortly before we submitted our petition and a

couple others had been working there for less than a year, which represented about half of the workforce. We had always run a slow-burning campaign, in which we would spend a long time building relationships and trust with people before telling them about the union. The people on our organizing committee had all worked in the office for many years and had built a solid foundation of experience and respect on the job. Normally, our own reputations would immediately invalidate most of the typical arguments the firm would pull out, like that the union organizers were outside agitators or lazy. However, our reputations meant nothing to these new people who had not been working with us for years. The firm, taking full advantage of these new workers, successfully turned a couple of workers against us and alienated the new hires from us.

We met all their hostility with civility and positivity. IWW branches and supporters from all over the country sent flowers and cookies to our office with notes of encouragement, and supporters in the community held a solidarity rally

outside of our office on the Monday before the election. In the end, the fact that the union busters had all the money and all the time to spend working on those workers who they knew were weak spots almost paid off for them. The vote on March 6 was seven-to-six in our favor. We would have liked to have had a stronger majority, but apparently all but one of the people who weren’t already on our organizing committee succumbed to the shameless anti-union campaigning. Based on that, I’d say the union lost the six-week public campaign, but it didn’t matter because we had won the three-year campaign.

The biggest challenge is ahead of us now—the bosses are now going to focus all of their energy on continuing to divide the people in the office and on making the union look ineffective. We now have to focus on staying positive, healing the rifts caused by the campaign, and learning how to function as a certified union. This has all been a learning experience, but the new territory ahead of us is going to be an even bigger and more important learning experience.

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Analysis

One Big Union And Horizontal Worker Cooperatives In Texas: A Story



An Ecology Action barrel (left) and a group shot of the workers (right), part of the oldest worker cooperative in Texas.

Photos: Ann Harkness

By scott crow

*“...They were doing it in Texas
They were drinking from a fountain
That was pouring like an avalanche
Coming down the mountain...”
—Butthole Surfers ‘Pepper’*

In the hot summer heat of Austin, Texas, in the year 2000, the workers of Ecology Action, a recycling center, decided they had enough. The staff of 12, many of them longtime employees, were working hard informally running the center doing both the manual labor and much of the administrative functions as well as running its various programs, all while earning on average \$7 per hour while the largely absent executive director was pulling a \$40,000 per year salary. Their boss was taking vacations while the workers continued operations in all weather. Under mismanagement, Ecology Action was running out of money quickly. The workers hit on the idea of running the center collectively, but how could they get that past an indifferent boss and out of touch board of directors? They needed to do something, beginning a journey that would change the course of their lives and Ecology Action.

Roots to Grow From

Austin’s Ecology Action had its humble birth on Earth Day 1970 when a handful of volunteers took direct action to do something about the “garbage” around them. They incorporated cooperative ideas into the nascent organization. Up until 1977-1978, Ecology Action was largely run collectively by volunteers and some paid staff with no boss. In 1976, Ecology Action joined with other burgeoning co-ops (consumer, housing and worker) and businesses to form a mutual aid network dubbed Austin Community Project (ACP), rooted in the ideas of direct democracy and cooperation. ACP only lasted a short time before it collapsed, leaving only two surviving businesses. At the draw of the 1970s, Ecology Action fell into a traditional nonprofit model trap with a typical top-down approach. Its only twist was that it generated a large portion of its money from being a business, instead of through donations. It remained this way until the millennium, going through executive directors who took it through economic boom and bust cycles of business.

Summers of Change

No one can say exactly when the change in the workers came, but it started in that hot summer of 2000 and would lead to historic changes over the next year at the little ol’ recycling center in Texas. The workers decided they wanted collective bargaining to raise their wages to a living wage with benefits. Predictably, the director and board refused to recognize their grievances for months. The small staff first reached out to the “professional” local unions for support, but was dismissed since it was a nonprofit and their staff was too small. Once again union bureaucrats left workers to deal with these issues on their own. Then the local IWW General Membership Branch (GMB), which had been quite active since the mid-1990s on local campaigns, stepped in to help formally bring grievances forward with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

The director continued to ignore the concerns—demanding people return to work—which led to a work stoppage at the recycling center. Finally, under the summer heat in 2001, it all erupted with the unfair firing of an employee who helped to unionize. Most of the staff went on strike. Hot days were filled with picket lines of workers, and those who stood in solidarity including Wobs and other supporters. Eventually, all the staff joined the strike. The center, normally open 24 hours a day for drop-off, soon piled up in mountains of recycling materials edging towards the streets on all sides of the small corner lot. Scabs brought in were soundly blocked from entering by the strikers. As the strike entered its sixth week the board of directors finally fired the director and promised the workers they could run the center. All the staff returned to work diligently reducing the mountains to rubble again. A few weeks later the board sneakily rescinded and brought in another temporary director to take the reins, fire disrupters, hire new employees and take control again. Texas is a right-to-work state without much worker protection, so the workers did what they had to do, ultimately striking again while the IWW filed grievances with the NLRB and helped mount a media campaign. This time the board quickly caved in to the demands under much controversy, with many, including the new director, resign-

ing. The workers began to return Ecology Action to its collective roots for the first time since the 1970s.

Making Our New Roads is Not Always Easy

Now that the workers had self-management of everything, they had to start asking hard questions. How do we run a cooperative? How do we equal out wage disparities? What does work-sharing look like? This was in addition to all the “normal” questions that all businesses have about their operations. There were more than a few anarchists on staff who brought some of their principles and practices to the organization, including horizontal decision-making.

They also looked to other horizontal worker cooperatives like Mondragon Café in Canada for inspiration, and set out to write new policies based on direct democracy, with mixed success. The staff members were able to give themselves benefits including health insurance for the first time, as well as vacations. They also raised the wages of those who had been at the bottom to a living wage, but there were still people who made more money from the old system (from being ex-management or seniority) and it was a constant issue sorting it out. Also there were vastly different interpretations of what self-management meant for those engaged in it. Some felt like everyone was a boss looking over their shoulders, others wanted self-management to mean that no one could tell them what to do and they didn’t have to be accountable to the collective, while still others tried to engage everyone in a path of power-sharing that is really what cooperatives are about. Without the boss to hate they turned on each other while trying to sort it out.

In 2006 the question of how to make Ecology Action operate horizontally entered the dialogue. People like me, who had experience in cooperatives or horizontal organizing, were hired in. The organization became rooted in set principles and guidelines and an experimental nature was adopted, with staff members consciously trying out different models, concepts and practices based on the values of shared leadership, power and voices. Over the next two years tough decisions were made. We fired people because they didn’t want to be accountable to the collective or weren’t willing to change. Others left on their own because we still had the gnawing issue to address of wage discrepancy to

deal with. They were given a choice to take a pay cut or leave with compensation. It was messy and rocky but we finally equalized the wage. An interesting thing began to happen on the road to power sharing: as some of the old-guard Left (which was largely white men), the collective evolved in a more diverse group, with the inclusion of women and queer folks in roles they had not previously been in before.

We continued to try different and new ideas as we struggled through not only the hard dirty work of recycling but also all of the internal work of creating a horizontal, sustainable workplace; ecologically, economically, socially and culturally. It’s a tall order to fill on any given day, but those were and are our lofty goals for creating just worlds. We continued to be members of the IWW and became a job shop in 2009 as well as joining the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives. Our philosophy was that horizontal worker co-ops are an evolutionary step in workplace democracy. We wanted to be IWW for three reasons: the first was to have union representation to support us if needed, the second was to support other workers if they needed it, and the third reason was to continue to push horizontal worker cooperatives as the model to possibly adopt for future worker control. We believe that to create new participatory economies we have to build businesses from the ground-up if we want to be in control and that is what we focused on, in addition to the recycling. Two of us from Ecology Action co-founded another worker co-op called Treasure City Thrift as a sister project (that is still thriving today). Our evolving business models looked at multiple bottom lines and sometimes that meant making a lot less money or it meant dealing with the devil. Capitalism and its tentacles still reach into every corner, but we have always striven to balance survival with principles with varying degrees of success. There are still many challenges to face and successes to be had, but we have lived firsthand the closest thing to a fair blue-collar business under the capitalist system that I have ever been a part of. Ecology Action is still experimenting, still changing and hopefully opening doors for other workers to think about different strategies in creating democratic workplaces. The IWW was the engine of the catalyst that propelled us into becoming now the oldest worker cooperative in Texas (13 years as of this writing).

Don’t give in! Don’t give up! Resist, Rebel, Create and Build!



Ecology Action workers using a baler (compactor).

Photo: Caleb Bryant

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The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email solidarity@iww.org.

General Strike Of 100 Million Workers In India

By Mathieu Dube

In what is most likely the largest strike in human history, 100 million workers went on strike in India on Feb. 20-21. They were opposing price hikes on commodities such as diesel, gas and electricity, as well as day-to-day goods. The strike was initiated by a very large number of unions across the political spectrum in opposition to the government's immobility regarding these issues. This coalition of unions has written a 10-point program of demands, most of them having to do with battling the social repercussions of high inflation in the country, but also including points on defending workers' rights.

The all-India general strike was a true show of force by the Indian working class, shutting down many parts of the country. Workers both from the public and the private sectors were involved. The organizing committee released a statement afterwards describing the strength of the mobilization this way: "Starting from Meghalaya, Assam to Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka and again from West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand to Uttar Pradesh, MP [Madhya Pradesh], Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh—everywhere the workers took to the street in the thousands, voicing their demands, defying all sorts of threats, intimidations, arrests, organized armed attacks and even the brutal killing of a striker of Haryana."

Several examples outline the size of the strike: in Tirupur, 200,000 garment workers went on strike; 8,000 state-owned buses were off the road in the western state of Gurajat; in Calcutta, the capital of the West Bengal state, the roads were deserted and public transportation was nonexistent. According to Reuters, "The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry said...the two-day strike was expected to cause a loss of 150 billion-200 billion rupees (\$2.8 billion-\$3.8 billion), hurting sectors such as banking, insurance and transport."

Around the globe, the tendency is toward stagnating or lowering wages, while inflation and price markups are rampant. This effectively means that the bosses are stealing more and more wealth out of the economy, which makes life harder on workers everywhere. The inflation rate in India is at 7.5 percent, while the rate of economic growth has been 7 percent. The



The general strike. Photo: wftucentral.org

cost of almost every commodity has gone up. As Amarjeet Kaur, National Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress, said, "Just take the example of petrol. In 1989, the price of one liter of petrol was 8.50 rupees (or the equivalent of 16 cents), and as of now, in Delhi it is 69.06 rupees (or \$1.28) and much higher in other cities." By demanding through solidarity that the government intervene, the Indian workers are fighting to take back what they're producing.

The mobilization was initiated by a coalition of unions from all parts of the political spectrum; a lot of unions in India have ties to political parties. A national convention of trade unions was held on Sept. 4, 2012, and the preparations for the 48-hour strike started there. Despite having been given a five-month warning about the possible shutdown of the country, the government didn't act on any of the workers' demands. The strike therefore went on, regrouping workers from 11 Central Trade Union Organizations and Independent Federations of Workers and Employees. Unaffiliated unions as well as unorganized workers also took part in the mobilization.

Even though the initial demands focused on commodity prices, several other demands were included. For instance, the 10-point charter contained demands for protection of the right of workers to organize, an increase in the minimum wage, universal social security coverage for unorganized sectors of workers and assured pensions for all. Attacks on benefits that were acquired thanks to previous struggles, as well as basic democratic rights such as freedom of association, need to be fought against, as the Indian workers demonstrated to their ruling class and to the world, despite the lack of coverage of these events in the mainstream media.

As the general strike in India has shown, the strength of workers across the world lies in our numbers. The general traits of the economy are basically the same in the so-called advanced economies, as well as in the "emerging" countries like India and China. The bosses and their lackey states are serving austerity, inflation and stagnation, with lower wages and diminishing benefits for workers. Only through united organizing can we fight back as workers.

With files from BBC News, Workers World, Equal Times and Reuters.

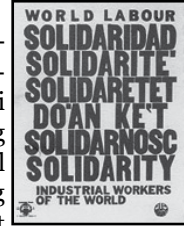
IWW Solidarity With Workers Of Vio.Me In Greece

By the ISC

The IWW's International Solidarity Commission (ISC) congratulates the workers of Viomichaniki Metaleftiki (Vio.Me), a building materials factory, for taking control of their workplace and restarting production after having occupied it for more than 20 months (see "Factory In Greece Under Workers' Control," March 2013 IW, page 12).

After fighting for the payment of their stolen wages since May 2011, the workers have now decided in a directly democratic assembly to collectively organize production without bosses. They have brought the factory back into operation, shifting to the production of building materials that are not toxic or damaging for the environment. The ISC is in full support of this move.

As the world plunges deeper into economic and ecological crisis, the workers at Vio.Me have shown us the way forward. Instead of waiting for the state to decrease unemployment, instead of leaving their fate in the hands of the capitalist legal



Graphic: iww.org

system or state bureaucrats, the workers of Vio.Me decided to take the factory into their own hands and to operate it themselves. The Vio.Me workers have given us all a living example of workers' power and have lit the way for all of us in the struggle against capitalism throughout the world. It is now up

to all of us to take the next steps in our own workplaces and struggles. Let this be one of millions of workplace takeovers to come across Greece and the world.

The IWW is committed to a grassroots global resistance to the employing class. We aim to work with others to build a movement that can defeat the capitalists and construct a new world-based workers' control of the means of production and a radically democratic economy. We salute the seizure of the Vio.Me factory as a step in the right direction and pledge our solidarity and commitment to stand at the side of all workers in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, for the creation of a world without bosses!

Five Steps To Direct International Solidarity

By J. Pierce

STOP: Read this column while using the internet. This will be practical and fun. The goal of this column is to have every IWW branch establish direct connections with workers abroad, based on which companies call your city home.

The Phoenix IWW has 100-plus Facebook friends who work for Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, a mining company in West Papua, Indonesia. We had several actions at Freeport's headquarters in Phoenix, Ariz., prompted by requests from Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (SPSI) unionists at the Grasberg Mine. We are thrilled about this connection and we want to duplicate it for more branches.

Step 1: Search the internet for "Corporate Headquarters" and type in your city. If we take Phoenix as an example, 72 major corporate operations pop up. Some of these are assets, some are regional headquarters and others are international headquarters like Freeport-McMoRan. Now, peruse your list and select a recognizable company that might have overseas operations and whose employees might advertise their employment. We are looking for miners, plantation workers, assembly workers, transportation workers, garment workers, etc. Contractors for companies such as Walmart and Nike might be harder to find, but it can be done. I will select American President Lines (APL) as my example. The APL shipping company has their North American headquarters in Scottsdale, a suburb of Phoenix. APL likely has operations overseas, is unionized and might have a presence on Facebook. Plus, we are aware of previous dock worker struggles with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and anti-war campaigns against APL war shipments. These elements make APL a great target for IWW solidarity.

Step 2: Search for your company's overseas operations. Look for their operations in a familiar locale or for their unionized workers. Wikipedia says that APL is owned by Neptune Orient Lines (NOL), that NOL is headquartered in Singapore and "wholly owned by the Singapore government" and that APL is the fifth largest shipping company globally. They have 10 terminals in the United States, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and China. They have 153 shipping vessels that call at 90 ports. So we are now thinking about the possibilities of supporting dock workers and seafarers. From my own experience wandering into the International Maritime Center, a religious hospitality house near the Oakland docks, I know that seafarers come from all over. I pulled out my old International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) magazines from that house. Evidently, the magazine is printed in English, Arabic, Japanese, Tagalog, Chinese, German, Indonesian, Pol-

ish, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. So the ITF and its workers might be our target.

Step 3: Search for a union in your target area. I quickly found the Singapore Port Workers Union (SPWU) which matches all three—they are dock workers, they are in the country where APL-NOL is headquartered and in which 80 APL vessels call and they work out of the Port of Singapore. However, it seems that APL does not have its own terminal in this port. So we are starting to narrow down, if possible, to Singapore, seafarers and dock workers, and the ITF and SPWU. All this is based off of APL's North American headquarters being recently moved from Oakland to Scottsdale.

Step 4: Search for radical labor in your target area. In a quick search, I found a history of left-wing unionism in Singapore, including communist, anti-colonialist and ethnic struggles. I discovered a very interesting Left union called the Industrial Workers Union which may still be in existence. So in addition to contacting the ILWU, ILA, ITF and SPWU, I would search for the IWU and other contemporary radical labor groups in Singapore. I could do this for other APL port cities as well.

Step 5: Search for groups and individuals on Facebook that fit your combination. For APL-NOL, I could not find the exact combination of an APL seafarer or dock worker that lives in Singapore. I did find some Singapore port workers, however. The key is finding the right name combination. For Freeport-McMoRan, they call it "PT Freeport Indonesia." Using this name, you will find hundreds on Facebook employed by Freeport. So far I have found individuals and groups for Port of Singapore Authority. I located a post by a Tamil individual that had a funny "trickle-down income" cartoon. I sent this individual a message in English and Tamil using Google Translate. Also, I discovered that Tamil-speaking Indians are historically known for their radical unionism in Singapore.

This part could take some time. Once you establish the correct circle of people and they know the value of connecting with militants in the company headquarters' city, the "friending" will be easy. Our experience with Freeport was effortless because they were engaged in an occupation and strike, we did a solidarity action, they found the Phoenix IWW Facebook page, and they friended us!

When each IWW branch establishes direct connections with workers abroad and offers to support their struggles in the headquarters' city, it could become common knowledge all over the world that you contact the IWW in the home city when you go on strike. Additionally, these relationships could grow over the years into formidable alliances and the possibilities are endless.

Support international solidarity!



Assessments for \$3 and \$6 are available from your delegate or IWW headquarters:
PO Box 180195, Chicago,

